

Week Ending Friday, December 1, 1995

The President's Radio Address

November 25, 1995

Good morning. All across our Nation this weekend, American families are coming together to give thanks for the good things in our lives. Hillary and I wish all of you a happy and healthy Thanksgiving weekend. As we rejoice in our blessings in the company of our loved ones, let's also give thanks for America's blessings and for all we have achieved as a nation.

This week, after a tough debate on the Federal budget, we made important strides toward what I hope will be common ground. Our Government is open again, and the Republican leaders in Congress have agreed to work with me to find a process so that we can establish our Nation's priorities together.

I hope we can balance the budget in a way that is true to our fundamental values: expecting responsibility from all our citizens but also providing opportunity so that we become a society in which everybody has a chance to win, not a winner-take-all society; honoring our obligations to our senior citizens through Medicare and Medicaid while also making investments for the next generation in education, environment, research, and technology; helping our families to be stronger and stay together; and ensuring that America remains the strongest force in the world for peace and freedom, democracy and prosperity.

All around the world we are seeing the results of America's willingness to work and to lead for peace. We see it in the Middle East, where even in the wake of the tragic loss of Prime Minister Rabin, Arabs and Israelis continue to turn the page on past conflict. We see it in Northern Ireland, where bombs and bullets have given way to hope for the future—where I will visit next week. And in this week of Thanksgiving, we have seen the results of America's leadership for peace in Bosnia.

After 4 years of terrible conflict, we have helped the people of Bosnia turn from the horror of war to the promise of peace. America's negotiating team, backed by NATO's resolve and air power, brokered a cease-fire. We got the parties to agree on the principles of the settlement and brought them to the peace table in Dayton, Ohio. And now, the skill and dedication of our negotiators, working with our European and Russian partners, has enabled them to reach a comprehensive peace agreement.

Peace in Bosnia is important to America, to both our values and our interests. The Bosnian people have suffered unspeakable atrocities: mass executions, ethnic cleansing, campaigns of rape and terror. Two hundred and fifty thousand people have died; two million have been driven from their homes, with over a million of them still homeless. The violence done to those innocent civilians does violence to the principles on which America stands. The only way to end the killing for good is to secure a commitment to peace. Now our conscience demands that we act.

Securing the peace will also prevent the war in Bosnia from reigniting and then from spreading, sparking an even wider and more dangerous conflict right in the heart of Europe in the Balkan regions where there is still a lot of tension and potential for conflict in areas near Bosnia. In 1914, a gunshot in Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo, launched the first of two World Wars that drew America in to make great sacrifices for freedom. We must not let this century close with gunfire ringing in Sarajevo.

The peace agreement preserves Bosnia as a single state within its present borders and with international recognition. It settles the territorial disputes over which the war began. Refugees can return to their homes. People will be able to move freely throughout the country. The parties have accepted strong safeguards for human rights. They've pledged to cooperate fully with the inter-

national war crimes tribunal so that those responsible for crimes against humanity can be brought to justice.

Now that all the parties, including the Bosnian Serbs, have made a serious commitment to peace, America must help them to make it work. All the parties have asked for a strong international force to give them the confidence and the breathing room they need to implement the peace agreement and to begin the hard task of rebuilding.

NATO, the alliance of democracies that has preserved our security since the end of World War II, is clearly that force. And America, as NATO's leader, clearly must participate. Without our support the hard-won peace would be lost, the terrible slaughter would resume, the conflict that already has claimed so many lives could spread like a cancer throughout the region.

In the days ahead I will review the NATO implementation plan and continue to consult closely with Congress. As of now, we expect that about a third of the NATO force will be American, approximately 20,000 troops. Two-thirds will be from our NATO allies in other supportive countries.

Our men and women will take their orders from the American general who commands NATO forces. They will have the authority to meet any threat to their safety or any violation of the peace agreement with immediate and decisive force. They will not be deployed until I am satisfied that the NATO mission is clear, limited, and achievable and until Congress has a chance to be heard.

I will discuss the peace agreement and the NATO mission in more detail when I speak to the Nation on Monday. I will also be visiting with American troops in Germany next week to talk directly with them about the important mission their Nation is asking them to carry out.

But on this Thanksgiving weekend, I ask my fellow Americans to think about who we are as a people, what we are as a nation. All around the world others look to us not just because of our economic and military might, because of what we stand for and what we're willing to stand against.

In Bosnia, our Nation has led the way from horror to hope, hope for no more Srebrenicas, no more shelling of children's

playground, no more desperate winters, no more shattered lives. Now we have a responsibility to see this achievement for peace through. Our values, our interests, and our leadership are at stake.

So let us give thanks for America's role in bringing Bosnia's nightmare to an end, and let us share the blessing of our Nation's strength to secure a lasting peace.

May God bless the United States on this Thanksgiving weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:30 a.m. on November 24 at Camp David, MD, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 25.

Statement on Signing the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1995

November 22, 1995

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2394, the "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1995."

In signing H.R. 2394, I am pleased to extend a most deserved benefit to our Nation's service-disabled veterans and the surviving spouses and children of those who made the supreme sacrifice in defense of our freedom. In acting to maintain the value of these payments, we keep faith with those who have given so much in service to us all.

The Act provides a 2.6 percent increase in compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation benefits, effective December 1, 1995. This is the same percentage increase that Social Security beneficiaries and veterans' pension recipients will be receiving in January.

On Veterans Day, we paused to salute all men and women in uniform. Today, it is altogether fitting that we give tangible expression to our enduring commitment to honor our obligations to them.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 22, 1995.

NOTE: H.R. 2394, approved November 22, was assigned Public Law No. 104-57. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 27.